

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: FINAL STAGES: MUSIC WRITTEN FOR
VIOLA IN COMPOSITIONAL TRANSITION

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String Division

Through the presentation of three performance recitals, this dissertation examines nine pieces written for viola by eight different composers during major transitional moments in their lives. Whether the moment of transition was set amid battling terminal illness, the end of their compositional career, or even death, these substantial pieces, often recorded and performed today, are significant staples in the standard viola repertoire.

The works chosen for this project showcase an effective progression of virtuosity for the viola as a solo instrument through the late 19th and into the 20th century. The compositions included in this dissertation are:

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Concert for Viola and Orchestra, Op. Posthumous (1945/1949)

Ernest Bloch (1880 - 1959)

Suite Hébraïque (1951)

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (ed. for Viola), Op. 120 Nos. 1 and 2 (1894)

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

Passacaglia (1941) and *I'll Bid My Heart Be Still* (1944)

Robert Fuchs (1847-1927)

Sechs Phantasiestücke für Viola and Pianoforte, Op. 117 (1927)

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 11 No. 4

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Märchenbilder (1851)

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 147 (1975)

Through analysis of compositional style and consideration of each composer's life condition at the time of composition, this project provides insight towards the origins of these iconic pieces and facilitates a greater understanding of the composers' connection to and proclivity towards the viola as voice at these significant transitional moments in their lives. The recitals were recorded on compact discs and are archived within the Digital Repository at the University of Maryland (DRUM).

FINAL STAGES: MUSIC WRITTEN FOR VIOLA IN COMPOSITIONAL
TRANSITION

by

Chelsey Alyse Green

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my Lord and Savior for His continued grace, provision and mercy and also, to my mother, Cheryl and father, Craig for their infallible love, steadfast support and unwavering belief in me.

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Recital Programs

Final Stages: Music Written for Viola in Compositional Transition

Recital 1 of 3

Monday, May 4, 2015, 5:00pm
Ulrich Recital Hall

Chelsey Green, viola
Alexei Ulitin, piano

Program

I'll Bid My Heart Be Still (1944)
Old Scottish Border Melody
arr. Rebecca Clarke (1886 - 1979)

Sonata for Viola and Piano
Op. 120 No. 1 (1894)
Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

I. Allegro appassionato
II. Andante un poco Adagio
III. Allegretto grazioso
IV. Vivace

- Intermission -

Sonata for Viola and Piano
Op. 120 No. 2 (1894)
Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

I. Allegro amabile
II. Allegro appassionato
III. Andante con moto

Passacaglia on an Old English Tune* (1941)
*attributed to Thomas Tallis
Rebecca Clarke (1886 - 1979)

Final Stages: Music Written for Viola in Compositional Transition

Recital 2 of 3

Monday, October 10, 2016, 7:30pm
Leah Smith Recital Hall

Chelsey Green, viola
Jessica McKee, piano

**Märchenbilder
Fairy Tale Pictures
Op. 113 (1851)**

Robert Schumann (1810 - 1856)

- I. Nicht schnell
- II. Lebhaft
- III. Rasch
- IV. Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck

Suite Hébraïque (1951)
Ernest Bloch (1880 - 1959)

- I. Rapsodie
- II. Processional
- III. Affirmation

- Intermission -

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 147 (1975)
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 - 1975)

- I. Moderato
- II. Allegretto
- III. Adagio

Final Stages: Music Written for Viola in Compositional Transition

Recital 3 of 3

Sunday, November 20, 2016, 5:00pm
Ulrich Recital Hall

Chelsey Green, viola
Jessica McKee, piano

Program

Concerto for Viola and Orchestra

Op. Posth. (1945/1949)

Béla Bartók (1881 - 1945)

(ed. Tibor Serly 1901 - 1978)

I. Moderato

II. Adagio religioso

III. Allegro vivace

- Intermission -

Sechs Phantasiestücke für Viola and Pianoforte

Op. 117 (1927)

Robert Fuchs (1847 - 1927)

I. Ländler Tempo

II. Ruhig und ausdrucksvoll

III. Leicht bewegt

IV. Andante sostenuto con espressione

V. Mässig bewegt

VI. Allegretto con delicatezza

Sonata for Viola and Piano

Op. 11 No. 4 (1919)

Paul Hindemith (1895 - 1963)

I. Fantasie

II. Thema mit Variationen

III. Finale (mit Variationen)

Compact Disc Track Listings

Final Stages: Music Written for Viola in Compositional Transition

Recital 1 of 3 - CD Track Listing

I'll Bid My Heart Be Still (1944) - [CD 1, Track 1]

Old Scottish Border Melody

arr. Rebecca Clarke (1886 - 1979)

Sonata for Viola and Piano

Op. 120 No. 1 (1894)

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

I. Allegro appassionato - [CD 1, Track 2]

II. Andante un poco Adagio - [CD 1, Track 3]

III. Allegretto grazioso - [CD 1, Track 4]

IV. Vivace - [CD 1, Track 5]

Sonata for Viola and Piano

Op. 120 No. 2 (1894)

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

I. Allegro amabile - [CD 2, Track 1]

II. Allegro appassionato - [CD 2, Track 2]

III. Andante con moto - [CD 2, Track 3]

Passacaglia on an Old English Tune* (1941) - [CD 2, Track 4]

***attributed to Thomas Tallis**

Rebecca Clarke (1886 - 1979)

Final Stages: Music Written for Viola in Compositional Transition

Recital 2 of 3 - CD Track Listing

Märchenbilder

Fairy Tale Pictures

Op. 113 (1851)

Robert Schumann (1810 - 1856)

I. Nicht schnell - [CD 3, Track 1]

II. Lebhaft - [CD 3, Track 2]

III. Rasch - [CD 3, Track 3]

IV. Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck - [CD 3, Track 4]

Suite Hébraïque (1951)

Ernest Bloch (1880 - 1959)

I. Rapsodie - [CD 3, Track 5]

II. Processional - [CD 3, Track 6]

III. Affirmation - [CD 3, Track 7]

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 147 (1975)

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 - 1975)

I. Moderato - [CD 4, Track 1]

II. Allegretto - [CD 4, Track 2]

III. Adagio - [CD 4, Track 3]

Final Stages: Music Written for Viola in Compositional Transition

Recital 3 of 3 - CD Track Listing

Concerto for Viola and Orchestra

Op. Posth. (1945/1949)

Béla Bartók (1881 - 1945)

(ed. Tibor Serly 1901 - 1978)

I. Moderato - II. Adagio religioso - III. Allegro vivace - [CD 5, Track 1]

Sechs Phantasiestücke für Viola and Pianoforte

Op. 117 (1927)

Robert Fuchs (1847 - 1927)

I. Ländler Tempo - [CD 5, Track 2]

II. Ruhig und ausdrucksvoll - [CD 5, Track 3]

III. Leicht bewegt - [CD 5, Track 4]

IV. Andante sostenuto con espressione - [CD 5, Track 5]

V. Mässig bewegt - [CD 5, Track 6]

VI. Allegretto con delicatezza - [CD 5, Track 7]

Sonata for Viola and Piano

Op. 11 No. 4 (1919)

Paul Hindemith (1895 - 1963)

I. Fantasie - II. Thema mit Variationen - III. Finale (mit Variationen) - [CD 6, Track 1]

Introduction

Artists illustrate the evolution of their life through their art. The realization of mortality, whether gradual or sudden, can cause significant change in one's life. Severe illness, dire political climates, financial hardship or emotional instability can have a serious impact on a career, and furthermore, can deeply affect how a person lives each day.

As a performing artist and composer myself, I have personally experienced significant career and emotional changes in the years since first enrolling into this DMA program. Those changes brought an increased awareness of the challenges such transitional periods can bring to one's artistic output.

Combined with my own personal experiences, an observation of the significant contributions to the viola repertoire written by composers in their final years of life sparked an interest to study this thread through the viola literature. I questioned the circumstances that may have persuaded so many highly regarded composers to utilize the viola as their choice of an expressive voice with these compositions immediately preceding their death.

The nine pieces selected for this dissertation project represent widely performed works for viola which all share the unique and interesting link of being written by composers experiencing major life transition at the time of composition. Birthed through life transition, these works are a fundamental part of the transformative emergence of the solo viola as a powerful expressive solo voice, and an illustration of the inherent personal and emotive qualities of this unique instrument.

Chapter 1: Recital 1 - Clarke and Brahms

The first recital presentation featured Rebecca Clarke's *Passacaglia on an Old English Tune*, *I'll Bid My Heart Be Still* and the complete Opus 120 of Johannes Brahms; including both the F minor and E-flat Viola Sonatas. Both Brahms and Clarke were in their final compositional periods when composing these works. Each of these pieces provides a vivid aural illustration of the composer's knowledge of the viola, and illustrates their highly developed compositional style in the way they so successfully utilize the viola's coloristic capabilities.

The *Passacaglia on an Old English Tune*, written in 1941, and *I'll Bid My Heart Be Still*, written in 1944, were Rebecca Clarke's final two pieces written for viola and piano. Both a composer and violist herself, Clarke's career was an emotional struggle. While enjoying a successful performance career as a violist, the discrimination against her as a female composer stifled the publication of much of her work. Even through the recognition of her compositional skill within her chamber works and the acclaim of her famed Sonata for Viola and Piano (written in 1919), Clarke was said to be merely be an alias or pseudonym for other male composers; notably Ernest Bloch, another prominent composer of viola literature at the time. In 1893, The Overture, the student publication of the Royal Academy of Music where Clarke would attend student publication, "The woman composer has a great deal of prejudice to overcome, and her best plan is to give the public only her surname and the initial letter of her Christian name. Then she will stand some chance of getting a certain amount of unbiased criticism - till she is found out."

Clarke moved to the United States from London in 1939 at the beginning of World War II. An unwilling immigrant, she was in the U.S. on tour and due to the war found herself unable to obtain a visa to return to Britain. After a surprise encounter in New York City with her old friend and former Royal College classmate, pianist James Friskin, they married in 1944. In a five-year period around the time of her move to New York, she composed a collection of shorter pieces for the viola and piano. After becoming more dedicated to her new domestic life and also growing exhausted from the conservative mindsets silencing her compositions, Clarke felt she could no longer dedicate enough of her time to composition to keep her creative energy alive. Around the completion of the collection of these works in 1944, Clarke decided to no longer pursue her career as a composer.

The *Passacaglia on an Old English Tune*, written in 1941, is based on Hymn #153 in the Old English Hymnal of 1906. This piece is attributed to British composer Thomas Tallis and was composed around the time of the sudden death of her colleague and friend, Frank Bridge. Clarke had deep and loyal ties to England; she was quite homesick, and was very unsettled by feelings about the war and her inability to return to Britain. Many believe this piece was written to pay homage to her beloved homeland. This work also has a dedication to a “B.B.” on its title page. Though many speculate on the specific person to whom it is dedicated, it is likely to Bridge’s student, Benjamin Britten, as the piece may have been a part of Bridge’s memorial service on which Britten and Clarke worked closely together to plan in 1941.

This piece is in the very bold and resonant key of C minor. Just as hymns are traditionally presented, the theme is stated multiple times throughout the work. Both instruments trade in carrying the predominant voice, and small variations greatly embellish the repeated theme. A penultimate thematic iteration may even suggest Clarke's own improvisatory interpretation of the theme. The *Passacaglia* ends with dramatic intent; a fortissimo dynamic coupled with resonant and deliberate chords in the viola part ensure the finality of the phrase and perhaps suggest the finality of life itself.

I'll Bid My Heart Be Still, written in 1944, was the last work Clarke composed for viola and piano. Written in loving dedication to her husband, this piece was composed shortly before they were married. Clarke mentions the piece being based on "an old Scottish Border melody," but the exact origins have not been discovered at this time.

This piece shines through its beautifully simplistic melody. Highlighting Clarke's keen compositional prowess, the viola part begins almost as if it is in the middle of an introductory phrase, but this in fact turns out to be the main theme, which throughout remains relatively unaltered in presentation. Through warm yet controlled coloristic timbres, the main melody is repeated six times in the viola part before the piece comes to a close. More contrast and variation ornamenting the melody lies within the supporting piano part through bursts of sweeping full chords and beds of resolute harmony.

Both beautiful and expressive pieces, perhaps this is Clarke's personal illustration of her feelings towards a bittersweet compositional career juxtaposed with the love for her husband and her instrument. I feel *I'll Bid My Heart* to be a fitting tribute, not only to her husband, but also to her viola at this important point of transition in her life. Though she would live on for more than another 30 years, that she chose to turn to the viola to utter her final compositional breath speaks to Clarke's affection for the instrument and the pivotal role it played in her life, both in performance and composition.

Johannes Brahms' Opus 120 was composed in 1894. As this was only three years before his death, this piece was one of the last chamber works he ever wrote. By this time, Brahms had achieved wide renown as a pianist and composer, but had given up his compositional career a few short years prior. After hearing a performance by clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld, Brahms became deeply moved and once again felt inspired to compose. Out of deep admiration for this artist, he stepped out of his retirement long enough to compose several pieces dedicated to Mühlfeld featuring clarinet in a prominent role. Because of this period of discovery and exploration with the sound and beauty of the clarinet, Brahms originally wrote Opus 120 for clarinet and piano in dedication to Mr. Mühlfeld.

Brahms himself transcribed the Opus 120 sonatas for viola, feeling that the unique and rich timbre of the viola could equally express such rhapsodic and emotive writing. Brahms had a great fondness for the viola previously established in his writing, both in his symphonic and chamber works. His widely heralded symphonic composition of *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* Opus 56a and chamber music works

including his two sextets and two viola quintets, all speak to Brahms' ability to embrace the expressive, wide range of the viola. It is his String Quartet No. 3 Opus 67 that especially highlights the allure of the viola's tone and texture. In accounting the history of the viola in chamber music, the aforementioned violist and composer Rebecca Clarke herself once wrote:

It is with Brahms, however, that the viola arrived fully into its kingdom. He seems to have had a particular affinity for its intensely personal tone - sombre yet glowing, reserved yet eloquent - so like the character of his own music.¹

In regards to his String Quartet No. 3 specifically, Rebecca Clarke continues:

...but in nothing does [Brahms] give it a finer chance than in his string quartet in B flat. The third movement (Agitato allegretto ma non troppo) is practically a viola solo throughout, and Brahms has brought out with extraordinary felicity the most characteristic traits of its so often misunderstood nature.²

Throughout Opus 120, Brahms' compositional mastery of counterpoint and rhythm combined with his lush melodic language are utilized to express the turbulent emotional state he faced in the last few years of his life, compounded by his failing health and his history of failed romantic relationships. The F minor Sonata, No. 1, could be classified as the more serious of the two, highlighting Brahms' confident knowledge of Classical sonata form and his ability to manipulate long phrases passed between both instruments seamlessly throughout the piece. In four movements, the harmonic structure of the piece illustrates dark moving to light, beginning with an

¹ Clarke, R. *The History of the Viola in Quartet Writing*. 1923. Music & Letters, pg. 11. Retrieved November 29, 2016, from <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/stable/726173>

² See citation 1 above.

appassionato F minor movement and ending with a vibrantly playful movement in F Major.

The E-flat Sonata, the second of the two in Opus 120, opens with a beautifully optimistic melody showcased in the viola part in E-flat Major; the serenity and tenderness that permeates this first theme contrasts greatly in tone and character with the F minor Sonata. Only in three movements, this Sonata continues with a swaying scherzo as the middle movement in the key of E-flat minor, a key greatly challenging to the player. This sonata ends with a theme and variations movement that takes a number of whimsical twists and turns around another engaging melody. This last movement once again showcases Brahms' expertise in manipulating melody around compelling counterpoint and dynamic rhythmic variety.

In this final transitional period in both his life and in his career, Brahms found not only the clarinet but also the viola to be a profound and poignant expressive vehicle for what would be his last two instrumental works.

Known also for his vast array of vocal literature, I feel it is no coincidence that the publication of Opus 120 immediately precedes his final two compositions, both vocal compositions. Through his usage of the viola, for Opus 120 and in prior works, one may surmise that Brahms regarded the viola as no less effective an emotive voice than the human voice itself. As implied by Clarke's statement above, the personalization of the viola resonated with Brahms in this way, guiding his emotional compass back to the instrument for what would be two of his final works.

Chapter 2: Recital 2 - Schumann, Bloch and Shostakovich

The first piece featured on the second recital presentation is *Märchenbilder* “Fairy Tale Pictures,” Opus 113, composed by Robert Schumann in 1851. Around the time of composition, Schumann began experiencing the early stages of a mental disorder. Initially manifesting as severe bouts of depression, Schumann’s mental illness progressed to manifest as episodes of delusion and other symptoms of schizophrenia, leading to his complete mental breakdown in 1853. Schumann himself requested admission to a mental asylum in 1854 in efforts to receive treatment after a suicide attempt. Unfortunately, Schumann did not outlive his disorder and died in 1856. This would be Schumann’s only composition for viola and piano. One could imagine this may have stemmed from a desire to stretch his own personal creativity by exploring the emotive and virtuosic capabilities of an instrument for which he had yet to write. Perhaps he was also seeking solace and comfort in the viola’s rich and humanistic tone.

Märchenbilder is written in four movements; *Nicht schnell, Lebhaft, Rasch, Langsam* and *mit melancholischem Ausdruck*. As the translated title “Fairy Tale Pictures” implies, this piece is comprised of four short character pieces. Schumann, a poet and music critic himself, was often influenced by poetry and fictional stories. *Märchenbilder* illustrates characters from three iconic fairy tales; Rapunzel, Rumpelstiltskin, and The Sleeping Beauty. In discussing the piece with Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski, the German violinist and conductor to whom the piece is dedicated, Schumann exclaimed, “Childish pranks! There’s not much to them,” placing it in the genre of *Kleinkunst* or “small art.”

The piece opens with a flowing, whimsical melody carried initially by the viola, written in the resonant middle range of the instrument. Within a moderate tempo, the melody is passed between the pianist and violist many times throughout the movement with both rhythmic and harmonic variation. The second movement, a buoyant rondo, features a cheerful galloping rhythmic gesture as its opening motive. Per the standards of rondo form, A B A C A etc., that opening motif returns several times through the movement, juxtaposed with two contrasting episodes of lyrical yet active motives.

Rasch or “quick” is a fitting tempo marking to depict the turbulent mood of the third movement. The viola begins with brisk triplet sixteenth notes accompanied by dark and dynamically agitated half note chords in the piano. Like the previous movements, these themes are passed between the viola and piano before a surprisingly capricious mid-section provides a brief departure from the vigorous main theme. A brief, passionately lyrical coda ends the movement with a repeatedly emphasized plagal cadence. *Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck* or “slow, with melancholy expression” suitably describes the final movement’s somber, yet contented mood. Elongated, nostalgic melodies give this piece a quietly fulfilled ending.

Complete with technically challenging viola motifs and evocative nuance between the viola and piano parts, this piece is far from “childish pranks.” Schumann effectively conveys his poetic and compositional prowess throughout this piece through virtuosic writing and coloristic timbral exploration.

The program continues with Ernest Bloch's *Suite Hébraïque*. An accomplished academic, Bloch was an esteemed educator and highly regarded composer through his lifetime. His career includes professorships and administrative positions at several prestigious conservatories including Mannes College (The New School of Music) in New York, Cleveland Institute of Music, San Francisco Conservatory of Music and the University of California Berkeley.

Written in 1951, this piece was completed in Bloch's final compositional period shortly after his 70th birthday. An inspired Bloch conceptualized five pieces for viola after witnessing a celebrated performance of his *Suite for Viola and Orchestra* (1919) played by violist Milton Preves and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Those five pieces became two separate works published as *Meditation and Processional* and *Suite Hébraïque*, the *Suite Hébraïque* being a three-movement suite for viola and orchestra, here performed in the transcription for viola and piano.

Though his legacy leaves an array of compositions for a variety of ensembles and instruments, it must be noted that he, too, looked to the viola as the prominent solo voice in several of his works within his final compositional period. In addition to the aforementioned pieces, Bloch would begin composing a *Suite for Viola Solo* in 1958, the final year of his life. As with most solo works for the instrument, this piece highlights the timbral extremes of the viola's range; lush open strings and boldly resonant chords are juxtaposed with brilliant phrase culminations in the high registers. Though not particularly melodic, the portion of the piece which he completed is written with the viola playing almost as one would speak in conversation, placing intentional emphasis on rhythmic irregularity and harmonic inflection. The piece ends

with a high B flat, giving no real sense of where the piece would go next. He would not live to see its completion and it remains unfinished to this day. Perhaps this was Bloch's final goodbye that he, himself questioned; using the viola to convey the message in the tone of his own literal and compositional voice. At the age of 78, Bloch died of cancer at his home in Agate Beach, Oregon.

Heavily influenced by his Jewish faith, much of Bloch's compositional language illustrates a harmonic homage to the rhapsodically melismatic and modal characteristics of Jewish music. In a note to J.H. Braun regarding his usage of traditional Jewish melodies in his compositions, Bloch wrote, "I have absorbed them to such a point that it may be difficult for future musicologists to determine what is traditional and what is Bloch."³

Rapsodie is an appropriate title for the first movement. Very improvisatory in nature, the viola part features a wistfully rhapsodic melodic line that spans the viola's range and coloristic timbres through the piece. The continuous melodic interplay between soloist and accompaniment drives the piece forward until a grand interlude, based on the robust and march-like second theme, is played by the accompaniment. Shortly thereafter, the viola reenters with a short but sweeping cadenza that interrupts the accompaniment abruptly. The movement ends with a quietly expressive re-articulation of the main theme.

The second movement and third movements, *Processional* and *Affirmation*, are in ABA form. Stately and forthright, the *Processional* maintains a steadily held rhythm where the viola outlines a minor seventh chord through rising and falling

³ Atlas, D. *BLOCH: America / Suite Hebraique*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 26, 2016, from https://www.naxos.com/mainsite/blurbs_reviews.asp?item_code=8.557151&catNum=557151&filetype=About this Recording&language=English

fourths. After an episode of a softer, more flowing secondary theme, the piece ends with powerful octaves that reemphasize the dignified qualities of the main theme. *Affirmation* features dreamy tonal harmonies with a calmer reoccurrence of the dotted rhythm used through the piece.

The final piece performed was the Sonata for Viola and Piano, Opus 147 written by Dmitri Shostakovich. The last piece he would ever compose, this sonata was completed mere days before his death in August of 1975.

While battling severe illness, including blindness and advanced stage lung cancer, Shostakovich wrote a majority of this piece in the hospital. The piece was dedicated to Fyodor Druzhinin, a close colleague of Shostakovich and violist of the esteemed Beethoven Quartet, a quartet that premiered many of the composer's chamber works. In learning of Shostakovich's rapidly declining health, Druzhinin rushed to learn the piece as soon as possible in hopes of performing it for Shostakovich before his death. Unfortunately, Druzhinin did not get that opportunity.

Powerful and introspective, this piece effectively translates Shostakovich's realizations of his transition towards imminent death. The sonata is comprised of three movements; *Moderato*, *Allegretto* and *Adagio*. Iconically Shostakovich, each movement is a reflection of his late-style writing - bleak dissonance juxtaposed with clear diatonicism. Very much preoccupied with the notion of his own mortality, one may assume that the composer was anticipating death at any moment as he ends each movement with the specific performance direction of "*morendo*" or "dying away" on the final note.

In discussing this piece with Druzhinin, Shostakovich described the first movement, *Moderato*, as a “novella.” This is a fitting description, as the musical intentions evolve much like the narrative of a short story. The piece begins with a stark solo viola pizzicato passage played across open strings. A low D-flat in the third measure quickly introduces the element of harmonic tension and release that will be heard throughout the piece both in the viola and piano parts. At measure 5, the pizzicato theme in the viola becomes supported by a descending piano melody that establishes a new theme that will be echoed in the solo viola six measures later. The piano accompaniment also recalls the motive first heard in the opening viola pizzicato theme and introduces new elements which will be heard in the subsequent movement. Though the harmony contrasts between dissonance and open diatonicism, the introductory material in both the viola and piano parts illustrate early on the emphasis that the interval of the perfect fifth and fourth will have throughout the piece.

The middle of this first movement develops into a robust, passionate section with much harmonic dissonance. Carried by triplet rhythms, these elongated phrases are passed between the viola and piano resembling a musical argument. After a powerful viola cadenza in the mid-section the triplet motif returns with subsiding energy and volume. The recapitulation features the same open fifths heard in the beginning, but now played by the piano. The viola then joins the aforementioned thematic return with the descending melody played using ponticello tremolo to add to the ghostly nature of this accompaniment.

The second movement, *Allegretto*, has a form reminiscent of a scherzo. Sprightly in character, but with sober tone, the material heard in the opening theme is

a direct quote from Shostakovich's own unfinished opera, *The Gamblers* (1942). The element of thematic contrast is prevalent in this movement as it alternates between the short, energetic introductory motif and expressive, elongated phrases throughout. Interrupted briefly by an impetuous viola cadenza featuring descending fourths which will be recalled many times in the final movement, the recapitulation of this second movement begins with a final episode of the *Gamblers* theme waning into thematic echoes that fade into a reticent final note.

The final movement, *Adagio*, is an introspective and moving dedication to the composer's legacy. The movement begins with a lonely, contemplative reoccurrence of the descending fourths motive heard in the viola cadenza of the second movement. This motif is the heart of this movement, guiding its development via significant rhythmic and harmonic transformation. As this final movement is developed, the music directly quotes material from many of his previous works, including his second violin concerto, Suite for Two Pianos, Opus 6 and all fifteen of his symphonies. Most famously, Shostakovich quotes Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata' several times throughout the movement.

Through diverse dynamic timbres, complex harmonies, wide instrumental ranges, varied recurring themes and melodic interruption, the Sonata for Viola and Piano, Opus 147 is a fitting finale for his compositional mastery. Shostakovich mentioned his final movement to have a "radiance" which can be heard both through painfully passionate dissonance and optimistic diatonic tonicization. His autobiographical writing throughout this piece is a clear indicator of his personal awareness of his own mortality.

Chapter 3: Recital 3 - Bartók, Fuchs and Hindemith

The first piece featured on this final recital presentation is Béla Bartók's *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra*. Posthumously published, this iconic viola concerto was one of the very last pieces Bartók would ever compose.

Hungarian composer and pianist Béla Bartók was born in 1881 and showed musical promise at a very young age. At five years old he began formal piano studies with his mother, and by age 11 he was already performing original compositions. Bartók later enrolled as a student at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest; here, his early compositional style became influenced by his study of the music of Strauss, Brahms and Debussy. After being awarded a teaching position at the Royal Academy, it was a trip to the Hungarian countryside to research native folk melodies that would spark the development of Bartók's strong affinity for the study of traditional folk music. Particularly impacted by the rhythmic and harmonic diversity of the folk music of Hungary, Romania and other nations, he became very learned on the topic, incorporating traditional folk elements in much of his compositional output.

In 1940, Bartók and his wife emigrated to the United States to escape the worsening circumstances due to the rise of Nazism of World War II. It was also in this year that Bartók's health began to fail due to what would later be diagnosed as leukemia. Even though he became a US citizen, New York never felt like home. Bartók initially found it difficult to establish himself as a composer in the US, but close colleagues propelled his compositional efforts with several commissions in what would be his last years. The works created for these commissions would become some of his most popular and widely recognized compositions, and included his

Concerto for Orchestra, Sonata for Solo Violin, and his Concerto for Viola and Orchestra.

Although at that time relatively unknown in the US, Bartók was approached in the winter of 1944 by renowned Scottish violist William Primrose, who had an interest in commissioning a viola concerto. Initially hesitant to accept the commission because of his own unfamiliarity with the capabilities of the viola as a solo instrument, it was only after listening to a live radio broadcast of Primrose performing William Walton's viola concerto that sold Bartók on writing the piece.

Nearly a year later, on September 8, 1945, Bartók wrote to Primrose:

I am very glad to be able to tell you that your viola concerto is ready in draft, so that only the score has to be written, which means a purely mechanical work, so to speak. If nothing happens I can be through in 5 or 6 weeks, that is, I can send you a copy of the orchestral score in the second half of October, and a few weeks afterwards a copy (or if you wish more copies) of the piano score.⁴

Unfortunately, this was not the reality of his progress on the composition at the time of this letter. Bartók would pass away a few short weeks later due to complications with leukemia.

Bartók was nearly finished with a third piano concerto he was writing in dedication to his wife for her birthday, but only extensive sketches of the viola concerto had been composed at the time of Bartók's death in 1945. Though his sketches of manuscript appeared chaotic, it appeared that most of the material for the

⁴ Huscher, P. *Program Notes: Béla Bartók Viola Concerto*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 18, 2016, from http://cso.org/uploadedfiles/1_tickets_and_events/program_notes/programnotes_bartok_violaconcerto.pdf

solo viola part had been written. The piece was completed over the next few years by Bartók's colleague, violinist, violist and composer, Tibor Serly, and William Primrose premiered the piece with the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra and Antal Dorati on December 2nd, 1949. Though additional editions and revisions have been made to the concerto since the publication of the Serly edition - including an edition revised and edited by Bartók's son, Peter - the Serly edition remains the most widely performed arrangement of the piece even today.

Concerto for Viola and Orchestra is written in three continuous movements; *Moderato*, *Adagio religioso*, *Allegro vivace*. Brief interludes provide climatic connections between movements both harmonically and rhythmically. The first movement, *Moderato*, opens with the solo viola introducing the melancholy main theme answered by distant, haunting pizzicato within the double bass section. For the first thirteen measures of this first movement, the solo viola theme is written in the style of an improvisatory recitative; Bartók will again use a recitativo style for the dramatic and whimsical interludes which will connect the subsequent movements in the concerto.

On considering the mood of the first movement, Mosco Carner of The Musical Times writes, "[the first movement] is pervaded by a feeling of conflict and tragedy that manifests itself in two aspects: on the one hand, dramatic outbursts and restless agitated drive; on the other, the somber character of the drooping first subject that dominates the movement."⁵ The main theme is transformed harmonically to shift emotional emphasis throughout the movement. A wandering, yet poised secondary

⁵ Carner, M. *Bartok's Viola Concerto*. 1950, August. The Musical Times, 91(1290), 301. Musical Times Publications Ltd. Retrieved November 18, 2016, from <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/stable/935876>

theme brings a reluctant stability towards the end of the movement. A dramatic *Lento* (*parlando*) section abruptly interrupts the movement's ending, featuring the viola, here again, with a *Parlando* (talking) character.

The second movement, *Adagio religioso*, begins with a soft, shimmering E Major chord in its tonic position, played by the full orchestra. This chord beautifully welcomes the reverent, prayer-like main theme introduced by the viola over the next eight measures, atop very little movement in the orchestral accompaniment. While more moments of the *parlando*, “spoken” solo recitative appear throughout this movement, a climax is reached at measure 30 where the composer indicates *piangendo*, “weeping,” a marking not previously used by Bartók. In this sobbing mid-section, the solo viola plays very high sustained notes against an accompaniment of scurried, running notes in the upper orchestra and rumbling, oscillated tremolo in the bass. This feeling of angst is intensified by the indication of *molto vibrato* in the solo viola to bring even more despair to this section.

Measure 40 resolves the aforementioned tension for two measures, then is quickly interrupted by a short reoccurrence of that desperate second theme. That pattern continues through the rest of the movement, ending with another solo viola recitative. A pronounced dominant harmonic is played by the soloist in the middle register of the viola. A brief *Allegretto* section takes over with bold majesty introducing the final movement. Harmonic emphasis temporarily returns to C as the orchestra plays displaced minor sevenths that provide subtle aural distraction from the reinforced intervallic emphasis of the falling fourth here again. The fast final movement expresses a tonal center of A.

The final movement is aptly marked *Allegro vivace*, as the spirit of dance is apparent throughout. This lively and vigorous finale, full of dance-like gypsy overtones, is a clear representation of Bartók's passion for folk music. Though a tempo marking of quarter note equals 126 is indicated, the tempo must remain moderately steady as the violist plays quick, anxious, chromatic sixteenth notes - that do not fall easily under the hand - through a majority of the movement. A short *meno mosso* section appears in the middle of this movement presenting another dance-like, Scottish folk tune said to pay homage to Primrose's Scottish heritage. The movement ends abruptly, with a final sixteenth note run ending hastily on a short harmonic playing the tonic note of A.

Quite technically challenging, this ambitious concerto speaks to Bartók's legacy. Known for his thorough study of the folk music of his region, this piece has a direct connection to that research and his cultural roots. This piece showcases Bartók's keen ability to utilize the many characteristics of folk music through virtuosic solo writing. Though Tibor Serly looked to Bartók's other late works to complete the work, including the incorporation of compositional elements from the nearly complete *Third Piano Concerto* he was also tasked with completing, the viola concerto effectively conveys the viola as a solo voice capable of unrestricted virtuosity.

The program continued with Robert Fuchs' *Sechs Phantasiestücke für Viola and Pianoforte Opus 117*, which translates to *Six Fantasies for Viola and Piano*. Austrian composer and teacher Robert Fuchs was notable in his lifetime as both as a

composer and as a music teacher to many prolific composers including George Enescu, Gustav Mahler and Jean Sibelius, to name a few. Though known at the time and admired by a number of highly regarded composers, including Brahms, Fuchs did little to promote his own work, thus fading into relative obscurity in the late Romantic era.

Fuchs' compositional style features skillful lyricism and an expressive harmonic language that brings a charming refinement to his work. His *Sechs Phantasiestücke* belongs to the genre of Fantasy Pieces, a musical genre largely brought to the fore by Robert Schumann in the 1830s. As with Schumann's iconic fantasy pieces *Märchenbilder*, discussed in Chapter 2, works within this genre are classified as short character pieces to be performed together in a group, which vary in mood and timbre from one movement to the next. Fuchs apparently rather enjoyed this genre, composing several sets of Fantasy Pieces for varied pairings of instruments. His *Six Fantasies* fit well into this musical categorization, even though the stylistic implication and tonal variety between movements is not overtly distinctive. While it is said that these pieces were written a few years prior to their published date, this collection holds Fuchs' final opus number and was published the year of his death in 1927.

Formally, "Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 5 use the special rounded binary form, Nos. 3 and 6 [use] da capo design."⁶ Rounded binary refers to an A-A-B-A-B-A format, where both the primary and secondary theme appear in the tonic and dominant tonicization.

⁶ Pascall, R. *Robert Fuchs, Six Fantasy Pieces for viola and piano Op. 117*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 18, 2016, from <http://www.contraclassics.com/browser/composition:746>

‘Da Capo form’ in this specific application by Fuchs indicates a form with the layout of A-B-A (slightly ornamented with a short coda or extended ending).

No. 1, *Ländler Tempo*, is reminiscent of a moderately paced Viennese waltz. The phrasing brings a stately sophistication to the dance-like quality of the piece. The primary and secondary themes are heard again through the B section extending the recapitulation, initially through the dominant tonicization in a short development section, and at the reprise of the initial tonic key of of A. No. 2, *Ruhig und ausdrucksvoll*, literally translated “calm and expressive,” illustrates a serene A section in F Major juxtaposed with a B section in C# minor, contrasting in tone and timbre with anxious, dotted rhythms and accented quarter notes. No. 3, *Leicht bewegt*, is a scherzo with wistful melodies and hemiola rhythms, carrying both the A and B themes with ease through major and minor key areas.

No. 4, *Andante sostenuto con espressione*, is a beautifully expressive aria in D Major with fluctuating chromatic harmonies. The movement ends with a unique coda; eighth notes and sustained dotted rhythms pass between viola and piano, effortlessly flowing from D Major to G minor and ending the movement in the original key of D Major. *Mässig bewegt*, No. 5, is another flowing waltz, but here in G minor and taking on a more serious tone, unlike the waltz heard in No. 1. The closing piece of the set, No. 6 *Allegretto con delicatezza*, is more classical in style than any of the previous movements. Another contrasting middle section introduces more Romantic harmonic treatments through minor tonicizations, but the piece ends in the previously established Classical style with a vibrant ending statement.

The final piece on this recital is the Sonata for Viola and Piano, Opus 11 No. 4 written by the famed German violinist, violist, teacher and prolific composer, Paul Hindemith. Arguably the most performed of his solo works, Viola Sonata No. 1, Opus 11 No. 4 illustrates expressively lyrical writing that exemplifies Hindemith's keen ability to beautifully showcase the rich colorful timbres of the viola with virtuosity and tremendous range. It is also a testament to his early compositional prowess; he masterfully uses late-Romantic and modern compositional techniques with ease and invention.

Hindemith's Opus 11 was composed between 1917 and 1919. It was in these years that Hindemith experienced several career and life transitions. Shortly after leaving conservatory, he joined the Frankfurt Opera Orchestra as a section violinist, but soon became the orchestra's concertmaster in 1917 at the young age of 19. This same year Hindemith was called to join the German army, where he first served in their regimental band playing bass drum and later fighting in the Belgian trenches. Even though he often performed both chamber music and piano while serving as a German soldier, he seemed to lack a certain satisfaction with his current assignment. A personal letter to a colleague dated November 5, 1918 spoke to his feelings while living in the trenches. He writes:

Our present way of life has of course many advantages: one travels the world free, one sees and experiences splendid things, one "learns to be tough," and, above all, one is part of the so-called Great Times. But why is one never satisfied?⁷

⁷ Hindemith, P., & Skelton, G. *Selected letters of Paul Hindemith*. pg. 23. 1995. New Haven: Yale University Press.

His time in the army did not slow his compositional output. The wartime composition of Opus 11 would include Hindemith's first and second sonata for violin and piano (No. 1 and No. 2 both written in 1918), his first solo sonata for viola (No. 5, 1919) and solo violin (No. 6, 1917), his first sonata for cello and piano (No. 3, 1919) and finally, the Sonata for Viola and Piano, Opus 11 No. 4 (1919). Publishing this many works under one opus number was a nod to Hindemith's early regard for the contemporary as the Romantic era saw each piece as individual, rarely including more than two works in a single opus.

It was upon his release from the army in 1919 that he made a decision to permanently stop playing violin and focus only on viola. His performance career as a violist took off relatively shortly thereafter while playing viola in the Rebner Quartet and in 1921, touring with the newly formed Amar Quartet as their violist. Hindemith would even go on to premier the widely performed William Walton Viola Concerto in 1929 after it was rejected by the renowned violist Lionel Tertis, for whom the piece was written.

The Sonata for Viola and Piano, Opus 11 No. 4 is written in three continuous movements: *Fantasie*, *Thema mit Variationen* and *Finale (mit Variationen)*. In consideration of the piece as a whole, violinist Tim Summers writes, "The viola sonata seems to have two major stylistic sources: first, the music of [Claude] Debussy, reflected in expansive gesture, limpid harmony, and ambiguity of phrasing; second, his new interest in playing the viola, which the sonata indulges mightily."⁸

⁸ Summers, T. *Hindemith, Paul: Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 11 no. 4*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 18, 2016, from http://www.timsummers.org/?page_id=51

While the harmonic language of the sonata leans towards the Romantic and Impressionistic styles, the treatment of both form and phrasing show Hindemith's modern command of form and the inventiveness of his unique musical architecture. The first movement, *Fantasie*, is beautifully placed in the viola's most sonorous register; it is quite improvisatory in nature after the establishment of the main theme. Comparable to Debussy's compositional style in his violin and cello sonatas, Hindemith allows the melody and harmony to identify both tonal and modal centers; using the vehicle of sweeping chromaticism to bridge the gaps. Full of rhythmic interplay between viola and piano, Hindemith uses mixed meter throughout the movement, and subsequently the entire piece, expanding and ending phrases musically and intuitively.

The second movement, *Thema mit Variationen*, begins where the first movement ends. A single sustained note in the solo viola connects the two movements, becoming the beginning of the principle folk-like theme in the second movement. Here again, Hindemith uses a mixed meter, initially 2/4 and 3/4, to easily notate varying phrase lengths. Through its variations, the theme receives contrasting harmonic and rhythmic transformation; expressively rhapsodic and linearly accented treatments propel the movement to a passionate and expansive hemiola in its final variation, accelerating the piece to a climatic and abrupt halt at the first note of the final movement.

The final movement, *Finale (mit Variationen)*, in essence restarts the piece with another improvisatory statement establishing the new principle theme in the solo viola, which is then answered matter-of-factly in the piano accompaniment. This

finale exemplifies Hindemith's finesse and skillful use of compositional form as he manipulates the expectation of "theme and variations" within a traditional sonata-allegro formal structure. Although two new themes are established in this final movement, Hindemith recalls the main theme of the second movement, including additional variations which cyclically connect both the second and third movements within the arched sonata form. A final reprise of the second movement's main theme ends the piece as a coda that amplifies this folk theme with dramatic flare and virtuosic vigor.

Conclusion

Through the research, practice, and performance of these pieces, I have come to feel that the proclivity of certain composers towards the utilization of viola as an expressive voice amid major life transitions may be related to the innate lyricism and the human vocal quality of the instrument. The viola serves as an instrumental realization of that sound quality: not too high or low in range or volume, but mellow and warm, timbrally nuanced enough to emote virtuosity and coloristic inflection. Additionally, as the viola remains an instrument of intrigue in regards to its virtuosic capabilities even to this day, I believe the viola helped these composers challenge their own genius, forcing the discovery of new ideas to make the viola speak even when their own voice would soon be silenced.

I feel this study to be particularly pertinent to the player; informing both musical intent and the performance practice of these iconic works. The technical challenges of these pieces require acute attention to afford successful execution, demanding much of the player's tone and facility.

Composer Hector Berlioz speaks on the beauty of the mournfully passionate tone of the viola in his 1856 *Grand Traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration moderne* writing that though it be "imbued with mournfulness," the "quality of tone [of the viola] strongly attracts and captivates the attention." All written at significant times of life transition, these pieces will continue to captivate, showcasing many capabilities of the viola with exceptional skill and beauty.

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